UNCLASSIFIED

Department of State

INCOMING TELEGRAM

(64)

PAGE 01 SAN SA 03430 070015Z 9368
ACTION OCS-06

INFO OCT-01 AOS-00 ARA-15 HA-06 PPT-01 CA-01 /031 W
----------137102 070019Z /15

P 061919Z MAY 31
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3689

UNCLAS SAN SALVADOR 3430

E.O. 12065: N/A
TAGS: CASC, ES
SUBJECT: INVESTIGATION OF DISAPPEARED AMERICANS

1. THE BASIC METHOD OF SEEKING THE BODY OF A US CITIZEN ASSUMED DEAD INVOLVES ESTABLISHING AN INFORMATION NETWORK THAT CHANNELS REPORTS OF THE FORTY TO FIFTY BODIES LOCATED DAILY IN EL SALVADOR TO THE US EMBASSY. THERE IS NO CENTRALIZED AUTHORITY FOR THE RECOGNITION/INVESTIGATION OF BODIES IN THE COUNTRY. THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE, JUSTICES OF THE PEACE, THE SECURITY FORCES, RESCUE AND MEDICAL SERVICES, THE PRESS, AND PRIVATE CITIZENS, ARE ALL PRIMARY SOURCES OF INFORMATION.

2. THE JUEZ DE PAZ (JUSTICE OF THE PEACE) OF A LOCALITY IS THE INDIVIDUAL WITH INITIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR RECOGNIZING BODIES IN HIS AREA OF AUTHORITY. THIS CONSIST LARGELY OF TAKING BASIC INFORMATION ON CAUSES OF DEATH, IDENTITY, AND LOCATING RELATIVES, BUT DOES NOT NORMALLY INVOLVE FURTHER INVESTIGATION. THERE ARE 215 MUNICIPALITIES THROUGHOUT EL SALVADOR, EACH WITH ITS OWN JUEZ. THE JUEZES OPERATE INDEPENDENTLY, COOPERATING ONLY ON AN INFORMAL BASIS. HOWEVER, CASES OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE WILL BE TRANSFERRED TO THE ONE OF THE SEVEN JUECES DE PAZ THERE. IN ADDITION TO ONGOING CASES, THE JUSTICES ROTATE DUTY ON A WEEKLY BASIS. THE JUEZ DE PAZ DE TURNO (DUTY OFFICER) IN THE EMBASSY'S PRIMARY CONTACT POINT FOR INVESTIGATION UNIDENTIFIED BODIES. THE JUSTICE IN SAN SALVADOR HAVE CONSISTENTLY PROVIDED EXCELLENT COOPERATION IN CONCERNING JUSTICES IN OUTLYING MUNICIPALITIES. GIVING THE EMBASSY THE OPPORTUNITY TO FOLLOW A NUMBER OF CASES SIMULTANEOUSLY WITHOUT HAVING TO BE PHISICALLY PRESENT AT THE REPORTED LOCATION OF AN UNIDENTIFIED BODY. THEY HAVE ALSO WIDELY DISSEMINATED DESCRIPTIONS, REQUESTING THE EMBASSY TO BE CONTACTED IF POSSIBILITIES APPEAR.

3. THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS TYPE OF INVESTIGATION IS TO ESTABLISH POSITIVE IDENTITY. FREQUENTLY BODIES ARE FOUND WITH NO DOCUMENTS, AND ARE OFTEN SEVERLY DISFIGURED. THE EMBASSY HAS REQUESTED THAT ANY JUSTICE SUSPECTING THAT A BODY MAY BE THAT OF AN AMERICAN, TAKE THIS FIRGERPRINTS AND TRANSMIT THEM HERE IMMEDIATELY, ALONG WITH THE NAME OF THE MORGUE OR CEMENTERY TO WHICH IT IS BEING TRANSPORTED. THE FORENSE LABORATORY AT THE NATIONAL POLICE HEADQUARTERS HAS PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT TO COMPARE FINGERPRINTS AND DENTAL RECORD.

4. THERE ARE TWO MAJOR OBSTACLES TO CONDUCTING AN ADEQUATE INVESTION. FIRST THERE IS NO COORDINATION BETWEEN THE MANY AUTHORITIES WHO MAY BE INVOLVED, NOR ARE THERE WELL-ESTABLISHED PROCEDURES FOR SUCH BASICACTIVITIES AS FINGERPRINTS. IN ADDITION, SALVADORAN LAW REQUIRES THAT UNEMBALMED BODIES BE BURIED WITHIN 24 HOURS, CONSTRICTING THE TIME DURING WHICH REQUIRES CAN BE MADE. THE SECOND PROBLEM, PERHAPS A MORE FUNDAMENTAL ONE, IS THAT MANY BODIES ARE DISCOVERED LONG AFTER DEATH, ARE TOTALLY DISFIGURED, OR--SINCE THEY ARE OBVIOUSLY MEANT TO HIDE FACTS ABOUT THE DEATH, AS WELL AS STRIKE TERROR--ARE NOT DISCOVERED AT ALL. IN SUM, EVEN WITH AN EFFECTIVE INFORMATION NETWORK, THERE ARE NO GUARANTEES.

5. ONGOING INVESTIGATIONS INVOLVE MISSING PRIEST ROY BOURGEOIS AND MISSING JOURNALIST JOHN SULLIVAN.

6. THE FOLLOWING ARE REPORTS TAKEN FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES

SAN SA 03430 070015Z

AND FOLLOWED TO CONCLUSION DURING THE PAST WEEK:

DATE	LOCATION	NUMBER	RESULT
4/30	SAN SALVADOR	2	UNIDENTIFIED: PRINTS NEGATIVE
5/2	SAN SALVADOR	7	IDENTIFIED; 1 UNIDENTIFIED DESCRIPTION NEGATIVE
5/3	LA LIBERTAD	2	UNIDENTIFIED: DESCRIPTION NEGATIVE
5/4	SAN SALVADOR	4	IDENTIFIED
	COL. ZACAMIL	1	IDENTIFIED
	MEJICANOS	2	IDENTIFIED
5/5	SAN JUAN OPICO	7	IDENTIFIED

CHAPIN

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/LR
REVIEWED BY HR DATE 8 JUL 1982
RDS or [illegible]
TS AUTH. [illegible]
ENDORSE [illegible]
DECL [illegible]
RELEASE [illegible]
PA or FOI [illegible]

UNCLASSIFIED